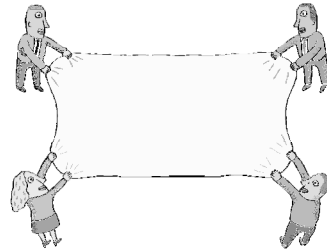# Homeless But College Bound

Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D.
State Coordinator, Project HOPE – Virginia

Barbara Duffield
Policy Director, National Association for the
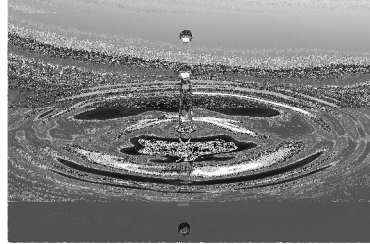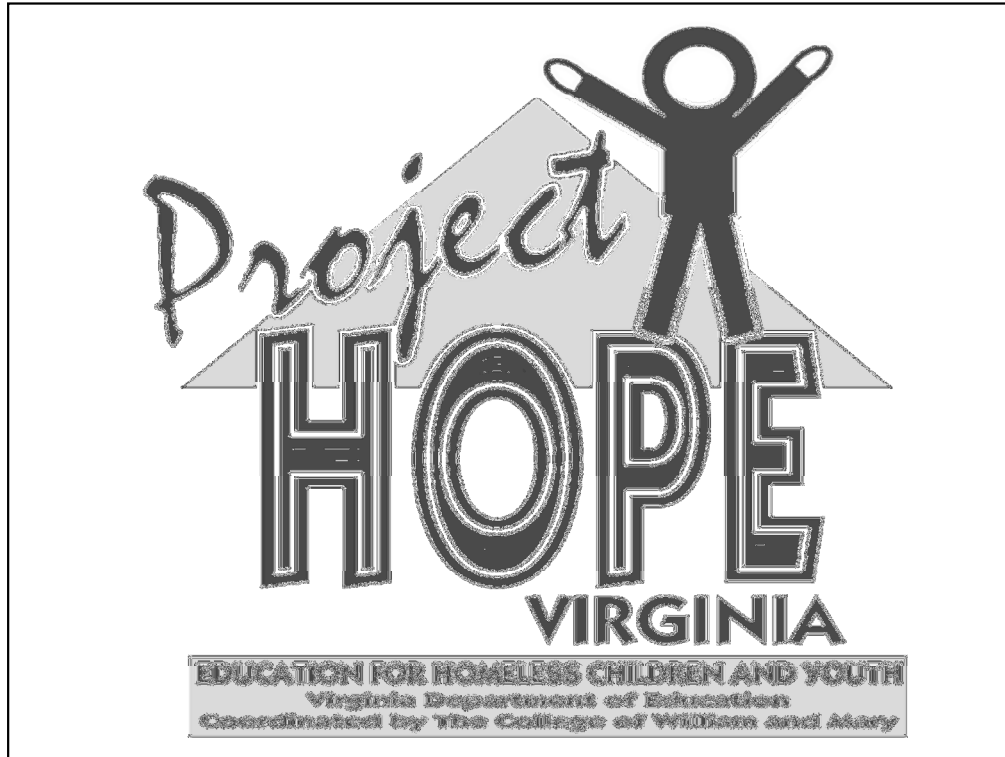Education of Homeless Children and Youth

# Agenda

- McKinney-Vento 101
- Virginia data
- Challenges
- Solutions
- Your questions

# Causes of Homelessness

- Lack of affordable housing
  - Foreclosures
- Poverty
  - Economic recession
  - Unemployment
- Health problems
  - Lack of health insurance
  - Addiction disorders
  - Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Natural and other disasters
- Abuse/neglect (unaccompanied youth)

ECHY office of the state coordinator for Virginia

# McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Education for Homeless Children and Youth
(EHCY)
Program

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Title X, Part C
2001 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

## Defining homelessness for EHCY

- An individual who lacks a *fixed, regular,* and *adequate* nighttime residence, including children and youth :
    - *sharing housing* due to loss of housing or economic hardship
    - living in *motels*, hotels, *trailer parks*, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate housing
    - living in emergency or *transitional housing*

**Why the broad definition:**

Shelters are often full, turning youth away

There are no shelters in many suburban and rural areas

Eligibility rules of shelters often exclude unaccompanied minors

Youth may fear adult shelters

Shelters often have 30-, 60-, or 90-day time limits

Youth may be unaware of alternatives, fleeing in crisis, living in over-crowded, temporary, and sometimes unsafe environments

# Defining homelessness (cont'd)

Including children and youth :

– abandoned in hospitals

– *awaiting foster care*

– having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations

Continuation from previous page

## Defining homelessness (cont'd)

– living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations

– *migratory students* meeting the description

– *unaccompanied youth* meeting the description

Some youth become homeless with their families, but end up on their own due to lack of space in temporary accommodations or shelter policies that prohibit adolescent boys.

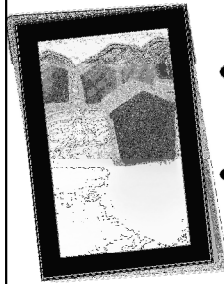Many unaccompanied children and youth have fled abuse and/or dysfunction in the home.

Studies have found that 20-40% of unaccompanied youth were sexually abused in their homes; 40-60% were physically abused.

Over two-thirds of callers to Runaway Hotline report that at least one of their parents abuses drugs or alcohol.

21 – 53% of homeless youth have a history of out-of-home care through the child welfare system.

Many youth have been thrown out of their homes due to their sexual orientation: 20-40%
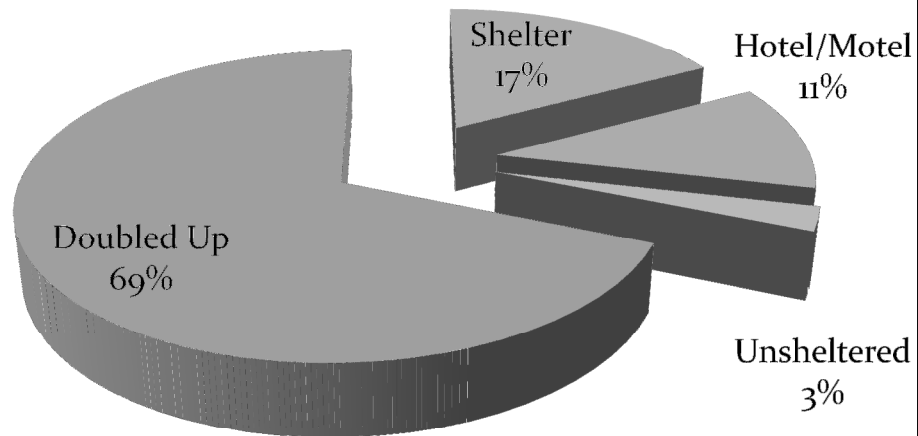
# Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **Fixed:** Stationary, permanent, and not subject to change
- **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis *(e.g. nightly)*
- **Adequate:** Sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments

*Can the student go to the SAME PLACE (fixed) EVERY NIGHT (regular) to sleep in a SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE (adequate)?*

# Numbers experiencing homelessness

- 2 million people annually – ½ children
- USED 2008-09 data (NCHE) : **956,914** students *enrolled* (41% increase over 2 years)
- Virginia 2008-09
  - **PreK-12 – 12,768** (29% increase over 2 years)
  - PreK – 408
  - Elementary – 6,998
  - Middle – 2,646
  - High –2,716

  2009-10 over 14,000
  11% increase over last year
  44% increase in 3 years

Primary Nighttime Residence
Virginia 2009-10

Shelter 17%

Hotel/Motel 11%

Doubled Up 69%

Unsheltered 3%

# School is both a safety net and a ladder out of poverty and homelessness

Stability

Teachers, counselors, nurses, and other adult mentors

Experiencing success

Job skills

Meals

Friends

Pathway to higher education

Safety

Self-esteem

Sense of normalcy

Talents and interests

# McKinney-Vento EHCY Requirements

- Appoint a local homeless education *liaison* in every LEA
- For Virginia liaisons, visit:
  - www.wm.edu/hope
- Provide outreach and coordination to identify students

## Assist with transportation

Public transit passes

Connect youth with carpools

Reimburse for gas

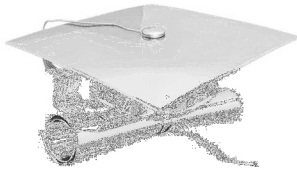Collaborate with school district transportation

## Work with McKinney-Vento liaisons to support students' school stability, so they can remain with the TRIO program.

# Supports to consider

- Trio and Gear Up
- College Goal Sunday
- LeTendre Education Fund (NAEHCY)
- Fee Waivers
- FPM consideration

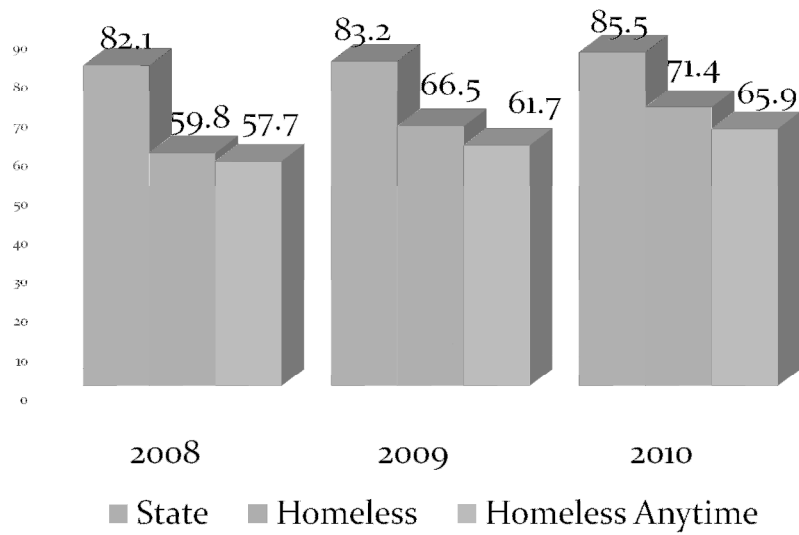Discuss use of MV subgrant for higher ed

# Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml

Virginia On-time Graduation Rate

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| State | 82.1 | 83.2 | 85.5 |
| Homeless | 59.8 | 66.5 | 71.4 |
| Homeless Anytime | 57.7 | 61.7 | 65.9 |

# Who are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

## Who are Unaccompanied Students?

- 2-step process
    1) Does the student's living arrangement meet the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless?
    2) Once homelessness is determined, is the student unaccompanied?
- Unaccompanied = "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian"; in practical terms, this means the youth does not live with the parent or guardian

Reference Gay Thomas decision making chart
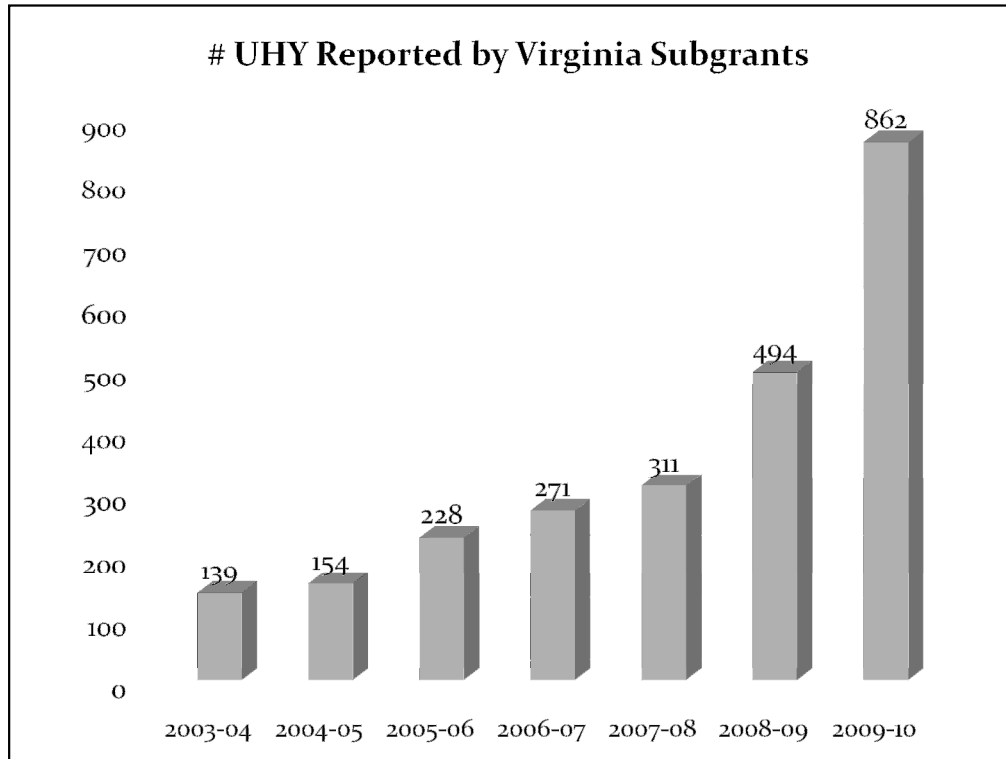
Paths to being on your own

Longstanding patterns of family conflict: blended family issues, pregnancy, sexual activity or orientation, school problems, alcohol/drug use

Abuse and/or neglect within the home

Parental incarceration, substance abuse, illness, hospitalization, or death
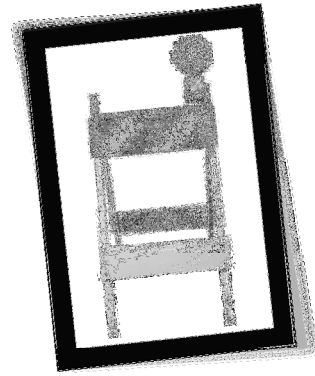
Foster care issues: running away from a foster care placement, aging out of the foster care system; significant correlation between involvement with the child welfare system and experiencing homelessness as an adult

Some students become homeless with their families, but end up on their own due to lack of space in temporary accommodations or shelter policies that prohibit adolescent boys

# UHY Reported by Virginia Subgrants

| Year | Value |
|------|-------|
| 2003-04 | 139 |
| 2004-05 | 154 |
| 2005-06 | 228 |
| 2006-07 | 271 |
| 2007-08 | 311 |
| 2008-09 | 494 |
| 2009-10 | 862 |

## Barriers to Education

- Documents
- Address
- Computer access
- Forms
- Campus resources
- Communication
- Street names
- Privacy Laws

•For UHY:

•Lack of financial means to live independently and safely

•Inability to be financially self-sufficient once enrolled in college

•Limited housing options, especially in small towns or rural areas

•Struggling to balance school and other responsibilities

•Lack of adult guidance and support

•Lack of access to parental financial information and support

# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and the FAFSA

This information is critical to get to our high school counselors.

# Financial Aid and FAFSA Basics 101

- Families are expected to contribute to higher education costs to the extent to which they are able *("expected family contribution" or EFC)*

- FAFSA
  - Cannot be filed before January 1st preceding the academic year in which the student wishes to enroll
  - *For dependent students,* filling out the FAFSA requires income and asset information for both the student and a parent, and a parent signature
  - *For independent students,* no parental signature or income and asset information is needed

# Federal Financial Aid

- Youth who meet the definition of "independent student" can apply for federal aid without parental income information or signature.
- Unaccompanied youth are automatically considered independent students.
    - Must be verified as unaccompanied and homeless during the school year when application is submitted.
- Youth who are unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting are also automatically considered independent students
    - Must be verified as such during the school year in which the application is submitted.

# Federal Financial Aid (cont.)

- Verification must be made by:
  - McKinney-Vento Act school district liaison
  - HUD homeless assistance program director or designee
  - Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or designee
  - Financial aid administrator.
- If a student does not have, and cannot get, verification from liaison or shelter provider, the FAA must determine eligibility based on legal definitions of homelessness and unaccompanied
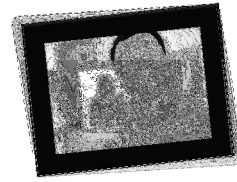
# 2011-12 FAFSA

**Step Three (Student):** Answer the questions in this step to determine if you will need to provide parental information. Once you answer "Yes" to any of the questions in this step, skip Step Four and go to Step Five on page 8.

| Question | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 45. Were you born before January 1, 1988? | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 46. As of today, are you married? (Also answer "Yes" if you are separated but not divorced.) | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 47. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)? | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 48. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 49. Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 50. Do you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012? | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 51. Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2012? | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 52. At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 53. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 54. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you in legal guardianship? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 55. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 56. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |
| 57. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless? See Notes page 9. | Yes ○ | No ○ |

For Help - www.studentaid.ed.gov/completefafsa       Page 5

## Role of the FAA

- FAA = Financial Aid Administrator

- *Application and Verification Guide*: if a student does not have, and cannot get, documentation from a Local Liaison, RHYA provider, or HUD provider, a financial aid administrator must make a determination of homeless/unaccompanied status

This is not an "exercise of professional judgment" or a "dependency override" for youth 21 and younger; this is determining the independent student status of an unaccompanied homeless youth

Financial aid environment:

Having to do more with less

Increased administrative burden

Competing roles

Serving students

Enforcing U.S Department of Education regulations and policies

## Scenario: Amber

Amber had to leave home the summer before her senior year in high school, when her mom was incarcerated. Amber's father has never been a part of her life and, in fact, she doesn't know where he is or if he's even still alive. Amber has been staying with different relatives since then, but none has been willing to assume legal guardianship or provide financial support. She's now starting to apply for colleges and is concerned about having enough money to attend.

- According to McKinney-Vento, is Amber an unaccompanied homeless youth?

## Scenario: Jeremy

Jeremy was kicked out of his house after graduation. He'd had problems getting along with his stepmom for some time and the level of conflict had gotten out of control. He went to live with his friend, Kevin, but Kevin's parents said Jeremy can only stay there until the end of the summer, when Kevin leaves for college. Jeremy is no longer in contact with his dad and stepmom.

- According to McKinney-Vento, is Jeremy an unaccompanied homeless youth?

# Determining Eligibility

QCould the Local Homeless Education Liaison determine independent student status?

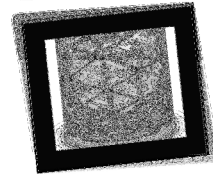A Yes, if the student was identified as an unaccompanied homeless youth while attending high school

QWhat if the Local Liaison did not identify the youth as an UHY during high school?

A The FAA must determine Amber's eligibility

# College Support Networks and Initiatives: Best Practices

# Higher Ed & K-12 Partnership

- Convene Task Force
  - Stakeholders
  - Best Practices
- Liaison and Higher Education Trainings
  - Financial Aid
  - Admissions
  - Student Services
  - Faculty
- Examples: Colorado, Michigan, North Carolina

## Recommendations:

1. Identify safe, single point of contact (SPOC) at each college/university to serve homeless youth. Add contact info on materials and websites

2. Develop streamlined referral process to other college services

3. Centrally store personal documentation for homeless youth through confidential, state-supported Website accessible by the youth over their lifetimes

4. Agree to single form for unaccompanied homeless youth verification within same school year for use by all stakeholders

WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, McKinney-Vento Program

Other ideas for colleges
Referrals to campus and community support services upon admission
Coordination between financial aid offices, student support services, and campus housing
Campus food and clothing bank
Housing for homeless students when dormitories close; leave one residence hall open or establish a list of "host homes" in community
Mentoring program

# Why It Matters

"I have lived in many homes and shelters. Just in this past year, I have lived in twelve different homes. I have lived with classmates, teachers, friends, and strangers. Anybody who would accept me was better than the street. I knew that education and God were the only ways to get out of this cycle. I stayed in school and made good grades because I knew with an education I could go far. I have always dreamed of being free. I want the freedom to know where I am going to sleep, the freedom to know where my belongings are, and the freedom to know that I won't be asked to leave in the morning or at the end of the week."

*Naomi Caren White - 2007 LeTendre Scholarship Recipient, 2008 College Student*

# For Information

**NCHE :**

*http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php*
*(AVG, ACT/SAT fee waivers, etc.)*
*http://center.serve.org/nche/best/higher_ed.php*
*http://center.serve.org/nche/news.php*

**NCHE helpline:** 800-308-2145 or *homeless@serve.org*

**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY):**
*http://www.naehcy.org*

**College Goal Sunday:**
*http://www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/*

**Office of Postsecondary Education:**
*http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html*

# Foundational Documents

- The McKinney-Vento Act and Policy Guidance, available at *http://center.serve.org/nche/m-v.php*
- The *Application and Verification Guide* (AVG), available at *http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php*

# Contact Information

## Project HOPE-Virginia
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